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Chairman: Mr. Djafar ABDOLAH (Iran).

AGENDA ITEM 24

Regulation, limitation and balanced reduction of all armed forces and all armaments; conclusion of an international convention (treaty) on the reduction of armaments and the prohibition of atomic, hydrogen and other weapons of mass destruction (A/3630 and Corr.1, A/3657, A/3674/Rev.1, A/3685, A/C.1/793, A/C.1/L.174, A/C.1/L.175/Rev.1, A/C.1/L.176/Rev.2, A/C.1/L.177, A/C.1/L.178/Rev.1, A/C.1/L.179) (continued)

- (a) Report of the Disarmament Commission
- (b) Expansion of the membership of the Disarmament Commission and of its Sub-Committee;
- (c) Collective action to inform and enlighten the peoples of the world as to the dangers of the armaments race, and particularly as to the destructive effects of modern weapons;
- (d) Discontinuance under international control of tests of atomic and hydrogen weapons

1. Mr. NOBLE (United Kingdom) stated that one great advantage of the current debate was that it afforded an opportunity to view the disarmament problem as a whole. That was particularly important at the stage reached in the disarmament talks.

2. New weapons had created new fears and everyone was agreed that the disarmament problem was more urgent than ever. More than ever, the world needed to find some way to replace the balance of security based on armed force by a new security based on international agreement and growing confidence. More than ever people realized that great quantities of armaments were both a burden and a danger. No country realized that more clearly than the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, to the great disappointment of all, the disarmament talks had still not led to any practical result. However, there did at least seem to be some possibility of agreement on disarmament.

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3. After eleven years of discussion a sense of reality must above all be maintained. Any one who believed that an act of faith was sufficient to set disarmament under way should look back over the history of the disarmament discussions and consider them in relation to world events.

4. It was not true to say that there had never been any disarmament over the last eleven years. It was true that the talks themselves had never led to any disarmament, but when the talks had begun - when the United Nations had first taken up disarmament in 1946 - all but one of the major military Powers in the world had either already disarmed or were rapidly disarming. Germany and Japan had been disarmed, the military strength of France was at a low ebb, while China was exhausted by years of war and occupation. The United Kingdom had reduced its military manpower from a little over 5 million in May 1945 to just under 1.5 million by the end of 1946. By 1948 the United Kingdom had had barely more than 1 million men in its armed forces. At the same time the United Kingdom had discarded and had continued to discard large stocks of arms and military equipment. The reductions carried out by the United States had been even greater.

5. That had been a true act of faith in the new era and in the concept of the United Nations. Had the Soviet Union done the same, there need scarcely have been any disarmament talks at all.

6. It might be argued that there was still the nuclear weapon, a monopoly in the hands of the United States. However, in 1947 the Government of the United States had put forward the Baruch Plan under which it had agreed to renounce its monopoly, to transfer its stocks of fissionable material to international ownership and to hand over its scientific secrets to be used for the good of all countries. All it had asked in return was the international ownership and control of atomic energy. Only the Soviet Union Government, then engaged in developing its own atomic weapons, had declined to agree to that proposal. It alone had rejected the Baruch Plan, declaring that the international ownership and control of atomic energy would be an unwarranted infringement of national sovereignty.

7. The Soviet Government's rejection of the Baruch Plan had been a turning point in the disarmament talks and indeed in world history. At about that time the forces of world communism under Soviet leadership had set on foot a succession of events that had obliged the free democracies of the West to look to their security and to rebuild the armed forces which they had so hopefully dismantled after the War. The world had witnessed the events in Czechoslovakia, Berlin, Korea, and recently in Hungary.

8. He was recalling such facts simply to show that there had been acts of faith in the past but that they had met with no response. On the contrary, the

political acts of the Soviet Government and its allies had obliged the Western Powers to rearm in defence of their freedom and their way of life.

9. The great burden of armaments today owed its existence to political tensions and particularly to the ideological struggle that dominated the world. There was little sign that the struggle was abating. There was some hope that the developments of modern warfare were causing both sides to reflect whether it was tolerable to live permanently in the shadow of great armaments and to feel that a halt might be both prudent and profitable; in that way, some measure of disarmament might be achieved. But it would have to be achieved without upsetting the precarious balance of world security which now rested on armed force and on the strength of the nuclear deterrent. If a disarmament agreement upset that balance, it would not lead to peace; indeed it might well lead to war.

10. During the meetings which the Sub-Committee of the Disarmament Commission had held in London in 1957 it had seemed that some limited degree of disarmament might be possible. In the first place all five members of the Sub-Committee had agreed to concentrate on seeking partial disarmament. They had recognized that in view of past history it would not be possible to agree on a comprehensive disarmament plan. Comprehensive disarmament most certainly still was the aim of the United Kingdom Government and of its Western associates, but it must begin with partial disarmament measures which were all that might possibly be achieved until there was greater international confidence.

11. The Sub-Committee had done valuable work in clarifying the issues involved in partial disarmament and in defining the paths along which progress might be made. Certain measures appropriate to a partial disarmament agreement had already been accepted in outline; others appeared at least to raise no objection of principle.

12. Nevertheless there were still serious obstacles to be overcome. The statements already made during the current debate by the representatives of the United States (866th meeting) and the Soviet Union (867th meeting) had demonstrated the differences between the two approaches to the idea of partial disarmament. The Western approach to partial disarmament had been set out in detail in the proposals which the United Kingdom, Canada, France and the United States had jointly presented to the Sub-Committee of the Disarmament Commission on 29 August 1957 (DC/113, annex 5). Those proposals were still valid and made for a practical and balanced partial disarmament plan. The First Committee now had before it a draft resolution, tabled by the delegations of the United Kingdom and twenty-two other countries (A/C1/L.179), which was closely based upon the proposals of 29 August. It set forth the six priority measures which its authors believed should be the main features of any partial disarmament agreement.

13. There were three types of measures which could and should be included in a programme of partial disarmament: measures of nuclear disarmament, measures of conventional disarmament, and measures of inspection and control. The Soviet plan likewise covered those three types of measures. All the nations represented on the First Committee were above all concerned with preventing the indefinite extension of

the arms race in nuclear weapons. It was the destructive power of those modern weapons which terrified humanity.

14. The twenty-three Powers provided in their draft resolution for three measures related to nuclear weapons. They believed that a disarmament agreement should first of all begin with the immediate suspension of nuclear-weapons tests, assuming that there would be agreement on an effective system of international control to carry out that measure. All the parties had admitted the need for such control, the details of which could be worked out in advance, so as to suspend the tests as soon as the disarmament agreement would enter into force. The authors of the draft resolution were not asking that the control system should actually be set up beforehand. Its physical installation should take place as quickly as possible after the suspension of the tests.

15. All the States concerned had already agreed on that in principle. The only disagreement concerned the relationship between the suspension of the tests and measures of partial disarmament. The representative of the Soviet Union had confirmed in his speech at the 867th meeting that his country considered that the suspension of the tests was not in itself a disarmament measure; it could not halt a race in nuclear armaments. Countries which could produce nuclear weapons and had already tested them were free to go on making any number of those weapons. Those countries which were most advanced in their testing programmes would retain or even increase their advantage if the tests were suspended.

16. Accordingly, the suspension of tests was not calculated to persuade additional countries to refrain from efforts to produce nuclear weapons. They could not reasonably be expected to abandon indefinitely their sovereign right to make such weapons, when the Powers already possessing nuclear weapons were not asked to do so. For all those reasons, the suspension of tests, if it remained an isolated measure, would tend to endanger the balance of security, not to improve it.

17. The Soviet Government maintained, nevertheless, that the suspension of tests of nuclear weapons should be carried out at once, without regard to agreement on any measures of disarmament. It argued, in the first place, that such tests were a threat to human life and health. The possible dangers to human health from nuclear-weapons tests should be kept in true proportion. Radiation from tests was a very small fraction of that from other sources, by far the largest of which was the natural radiation that had existed in the world from the beginning of time. That was a complex subject, particularly with regard to internal radiation. The Government of the United Kingdom was keeping a close watch on it and taking an active part in the work of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, which the General Assembly had set up to conduct an international investigation. In any case, it was obvious that the dangers of war were a far greater threat to mankind than any radiation likely to result from tests of nuclear weapons.

18. The second argument was that the suspension of tests was a relatively simple measure, which could be put into effect at once. It was argued that that measure itself would greatly increase confidence and facilitate disarmament. He could not agree with that point of

view. The suspension of tests, if it remained an isolated measure, would tend to disturb the balance of security. The representative of Japan had recognized that danger in his statement on 10 October (866th meeting), in which he had sincerely endeavoured to combine a temporary suspension of tests with efforts to hasten a balanced agreement on disarmament. It was also evident from the Indian draft resolutions that the Government of India likewise sincerely believed that the suspension of tests could facilitate negotiations on disarmament. He could not share that view. To his mind it did not by any means follow that the execution of that measure unconnected with disarmament, a measure which might well have an adverse effect on world security, would be likely to promote agreement on real disarmament. In any case the United Kingdom Government was not prepared to take such a risk. Until it had a clear assurance of the security to be expected from real disarmament, it must retain its right to test and improve the nuclear deterrent upon which its own security and that of so many other countries depended.

19. That was why the suspension of tests must be linked with action to ensure that future production of fissionable material was not indefinitely available for making weapons, and also linked with action to reduce the present high levels of conventional armaments. In the proposals submitted by the four Western Powers on 29 August 1957 such measures had been included in straightforward and realistic terms.

20. With regard to action to deal with nuclear weapons, the Committee would find the relevant proposals in operative paragraph 1 (b) and (c) of the twenty-three Power draft resolution (A/C.1/L.179). In the first place, the sponsors proposed stopping the production of fissionable material for nuclear weapons. That was the minimum measure in dealing with the problem of nuclear weapons; at the same time it was the maximum measure for which effective control would be possible in a partial disarmament agreement. That measure would provide the basis for the next step, which was the gradual reduction of existing military stocks of fissionable material.

21. He would emphasize once again that the sponsors of the joint draft resolution were not seeking to make simultaneous the timing of the three measures related to nuclear weapons. They recognized that a considerable interval might be needed after the suspension of tests in order to design and install the inspection system necessary to control the production of fissionable material. It was wrong and disingenuous to suggest, as did the Soviet Government, that the Western Powers were seeking to delay the suspension of tests by making it wait upon those more complex measures in the nuclear field. In the proposals contained in the twenty-three Power draft resolution, the detailed working out of those measures could come after the suspension of tests had begun.

22. The Soviet Union's proposals called for the complete elimination and destruction of all nuclear weapons; pending that, they advocated an unconditional ban on the use of such weapons for at least five years. The twenty-three Power proposal to stop the production of fissionable material for weapons seemed to be the point to which the Soviet Government objected most strongly of all. He had found no very clear or convincing reason for that objection in Mr. Gromyko's statement. At the 867th meeting, the representative of the Soviet Union had merely declared to begin with,

that the adoption of that proposal would not bring about the complete elimination and prohibition of nuclear weapons, together with the destruction of stockpiles. He was perfectly right, but the reason was clear: nuclear weapons now existed in larger numbers and were presumably widely distributed over the territories of the countries which produced them. There was no conceivable chance of instituting a system of control so effective as to account for all those existing weapons. The Soviet Government itself had clearly recognized that fact in the text which it had put before the Sub-Committee of the Disarmament Commission on 10 May 1955 (DC/71, annex 15).

23. Secondly, the Soviet Union representative had poured scorn on the undertaking offered in the four-Power proposals of 29 August 1957, to the effect that nuclear weapons should never be used unless absolutely necessary in self-defence. It wanted an absolute ban on the use of nuclear weapons. The United Kingdom Government could not agree to such a ban first, as a matter of principle, because such a ban could consist of nothing more than a series of unilateral undertakings. The United Kingdom regarded that as a quite unacceptable and unrealistic method of seeking disarmament in the present state of international relations. The representative of Peru had made that point admirably clear in his speech on 11 October (868th meeting).

24. Furthermore, the Soviet Government's attitude was more than a little cynical. At a Soviet military conference on 16 March 1957, Marshal Zhukov had said that atomic weapons would more and more take the place of conventional armaments and that in the event of a major armed conflict they were bound to play a leading part. That statement made perfectly sound military sense, but it made nonsense of the Soviet proposal for an absolute ban on the use of nuclear weapons. In a series of notes to Western European Governments, the Soviet Government had quite clearly warned them of nuclear destruction of the most devastating kind. All that applied equally, of course, to the proposal for a five-year ban.

25. The real reason for the Soviet Government's objections to the proposals to stop production of nuclear material for weapons had been made clear in London on 8 July 1957, at a meeting of the Sub-Committee of the Disarmament Commission, when Mr. Zorin, the representative of the USSR, had pointed out that that measure would be linked with the institution of a system of control and would involve the submission by States of information which was vital to their security.^{1/} The twenty-three Powers were willing to admit an international control organization to their plants producing fissionable material. The Soviet Union's objection to that was exactly the same one that had wrecked the Baruch Plan: the measures proposed at that time had appeared to it as an unwarrantable infringement of national sovereignty. The Soviet Union had not changed its position at all, although the control now suggested by the twenty-three Powers was very much less than that in the Baruch Plan.

26. Turning to the question of conventional armaments, he said the nature of possible conventional disarmament measures was already substantially agreed between the Western Powers and the Soviet Union. They had agreed on the kind of reductions that

^{1/} See document DC/SC.1/PV.132.

might take place in three stages, but not on whether a partial disarmament plan could properly contain a formal commitment in advance to all those three stages. The United Kingdom Government felt that it could not commit itself in advance beyond the first stage. That was because the second and third stage reductions would go almost to the point of comprehensive disarmament in the conventional field, where present defence systems would have to be radically altered. Such a commitment could not be accepted without any assurance of progress towards solving the political problems which had caused the Western Powers to erect their present defence systems.

27. The United Kingdom, however, was ready to carry out the first stage in a disarmament agreement in the field of conventional armaments without any political conditions, in the hope of creating such confidence as would help all to solve the political problems. Although the Soviet Government was blaming the West for not committing itself to all three stages, it was in fact attaching political conditions even to a first stage, in its proposals with regard to Germany and neighbouring countries.

28. He went on to deal with the system of inspection to safeguard against the possibility of surprise attack. The Soviet Union accepted both types of inspection, air and ground, but it did so unwillingly in the case of aerial inspection. Whereas the four Western Powers were willing to open the whole of their countries to such inspection, the Soviet Union would accept it only on the Western fringes of its territory and in the largely deserted areas of eastern Siberia. Once again, it feared for its security. It should be made absolutely plain that the inspection would be carried out by international teams, always including a representative of the Government whose territory was being inspected. Likewise, the result of that inspection would be available to all the parties. He recalled the international teams which had so successfully policed Vienna in the post-war occupation. He hoped that the Soviet Union Government would reconsider its position.

29. The last measure included in the twenty-three Power draft resolution provided for joint study of the design of an inspection system to ensure that the sending of objects through outer space would be exclusively for peaceful and scientific purposes. That proposal derived from a suggestion by the representative of the United States at the eleventh session of the General Assembly (A/C.1/783). A joint study was required, as the first task was to identify the problem and to consider its technical aspects.

30. Similar technical study would be needed before some of the other disarmament measures could be given practical and definite form. His Government had already proposed that small groups of experts could be appointed for those technical studies, pending full agreement on a disarmament plan. It would be logical also to have such a study of the control of objects entering outer space. The United States Government had announced that, if there was general agreement to that study on a multilateral basis, it was ready to participate without awaiting the conclusion of negotiations on other matters. The United Kingdom Government was willing to take part in a study on the same terms.

31. In the last two operative paragraphs of the draft resolution, the Disarmament Commission was re-

quested to reconvene its Sub-Committee as soon as feasible to pursue negotiations for the kind of partial disarmament outlined in the six points set forth in paragraph 1, while the Sub-Committee was requested to submit a report to the Disarmament Commission by 30 April 1958.

32. His delegation considered the Sub-Committee of the Disarmament Commission the most suitable body for a study of the problem. Very considerable difficulties had to be overcome because a disarmament agreement would be something like a charter for world security, a detailed, carefully drafted international treaty. A small working body was best suited for delicate and detailed negotiation.

33. Mr. Gromyko's statement at the 867th meeting contained no reference whatever to the patient, expert work which was needed, if disarmament was to become a reality. The United Kingdom Government was anxious to proceed with such work without delay, even before full agreement in principle had been reached. The Soviet delegation insisted that commitments should be undertaken before the measures to be adopted had been defined. That method could not achieve good results.

34. He did not deny the value of public discussion of the question and the help that might be obtained from countries not represented in the Sub-Committee. The proper forums for that existed in the General Assembly and the Disarmament Commission. It would perhaps be advantageous for the Commission to keep in closer touch with its Sub-Committee. As regards public opinion, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belgium had rightly pointed out (685th plenary meeting) the need for better understanding of the disarmament problem by the man in the street. The United Kingdom delegation therefore warmly supported the Belgian draft resolution now before the Committee (A/3630/Corr.1).

35. He hoped that the First Committee would adopt the twenty-three-Power draft resolution. It was the directive the General Assembly should give if it wished to encourage progress towards a sound, workable and properly safeguarded first step in disarmament and to replace security based on armed strength by security based on international agreement. The Soviet Union's proposals were apparently designed to upset the balance of security in its favour. They were designed to neutralize the protection which nuclear weapons afforded to the Western Powers, while leaving the Soviet Union in full possession of its nuclear weapons and substantially untouched by international control. At the same time, the Soviet Union demanded the dismantling of the Western defence system without showing any intention of modifying the policies which had made that system necessary.

36. The execution of the disarmament programme in the twenty-three-Power draft resolution (A/C.1/L.179) would confer an immense benefit on the world; he was confident that it would receive the moral backing of the United Nations.

37. The CHAIRMAN announced that the meeting scheduled for that afternoon would be cancelled, since there were no speakers on the list. He appealed to the delegations which wished to make statements in the general debate on the question of disarmament to do so without delay, as the Committee should take up the draft resolutions before it as soon as possible.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.